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December 30, 2005

To: Commissioner Mike Barton  
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

From: Mayor Bob Weinstein

Subject: STIP Comments/Gravina Access

This is to comment on the revised draft 2006-2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as proposed by the Department. These comments are in addition to those recently submitted by the City, and are limited only to the Gravina Access project.

As you know, this community is strongly in favor of the Gravina Access project, which has been a goal in Ketchikan essentially since the airport was constructed across the Narrows from town. Our Congressional delegation, with or without earmarks, has obtained substantial funding which is intended to make this project a reality.

Department personnel, especially at the regional staff level, have given me and many others here and elsewhere a strong impression that they does not support the project and have used the STIP process to create a public impression that the Gravina and Knik projects are the sole impediments to building all other desired transportation infrastructure throughout the state. With respect to the Gravina project, this has included the use of inflated cost estimates and cash flow projections, the use of per capita expenditure projections by community (a statistical technique which is so flawed and outrageous that it has even been rejected by federal transportation planners), and other misleading uses of information and potential impacts. With the release of the current revision, I found it interesting that, while nearly \$175 million was allocated for Juneau access (a project supported by Juneau staff), the Department continued to release information to the press and other communities which in essence stated that every dollar allocated for the Gravina project was having an impact on projects in communities like Sitka and Petersburg, while not a single dollar of the \$175 million for the regional staff's favorite project was having any similar impact whatsoever. In essence, the department used the STIP process and the media to create a worst case scenario regarding the Gravina project, and then proceeded to shout it from the roof tops.

On behalf of the City, I am asking that:

1. The Department create a realistic financing plan and have it approved by appropriate agencies as soon as possible.
2. The Gravina project remain in the STIP so that construction can begin in 2006 and minimizing the impact of the project on the other needed projects in Alaska.
3. construction of the project begin in 2006. Unlike some other projects which may be favored by DOT staff, this project has been through the EIS process and a record of decision has been issued.

This project is important to the short term and long term future of Ketchikan. The Department should do what our elected federal, state, and local officials have requested: build the Gravina Access project.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Weinstein". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Thank you." text.